

From left, Anne, Ginny and Mark Atwood, of Oak Hill, co-founded The Chris Atwood Foundation to kick the stigma of heroin addiction and provide a comprehensive treatment resource list for Fairfax County.



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Sarah Kain Gutowski

Herndon High Graduate Publishes 'Fabulous Beast'

Herndon High School graduate Sarah Kain Gutowski has published her first chapbook of poetry, "Fabulous Beast: The Sow," a cycle of 19 poems in the form of a fable. Published by Hyacinth Girl Press (available for \$6 plus shipping at hyacinthgirlpress.com), Gutowski's poems explore the subjects of motherhood and post-partum depression, through the eyes of a sow.

A 1994 graduate of Herndon, Gutowski's poetry has been published in Verse Daily, The Gettysburg Review, The Southern Review, Epiphany, as well as past issues of The Threepenny Review and So to Speak: A Feminist Journal of Language and Art. Today, she is an associate professor of English at Suffolk County Community College in Long Island, N.Y., as well as a loving wife and mother of three.

"The Sow" follows the life of a sow with the ability to shift her shape into different animal forms, and the discoveries she makes as she changes—at first unintentionally, and then deliberately — from pig to human and back again.

Gutowski received a Bachelor of Arts degree from James Madison University in 1998 and a Master of Fine Arts in poetry from New York University in 2002. In 2004, she was a semi-finalist in the Discovery/The Nation contest, and over the past 10 years, has been a featured reader at multiple venues in the New York City area, from Manhattan to Sag Harbor on Long Island. She keeps a record of her writing life, experience in academia and parenthood on her blog:

www.mimsyandoutgrabe.blogspot.com.

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Thomas Cranmer is a first time Chief Election Officer, overseeing the show at Precinct 327, polling at Herndon High School.



PHOTO BY
ANDREA WORKER/
THE CONNECTION

Herndon Hits the Polls

ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

Chilly temperatures didn't stop Nikki Malabressi from walking about a half mile to her polling place at Herndon High School (HHS). "It's a privilege to vote. I don't understand the people who don't vote and then complain about everything and everyone and how the country is going all wrong. Where were you on Election Day? That's what I want to know." Malabressi looked around at the nearly empty parking lot and the quiet school hallway leading to the voting booths set up in the school cafeteria. "Where is everybody?"

Frank Bloodworth is hoping the relative quiet around HHS doesn't mean low voter turnout, either. "We need a good turnout. There's a lot at stake here, for us in Virginia, but I think as part of the whole country, too."

Bloodworth echoed the sentiments of a number of people keeping a close eye on the governor's race in Virginia. Considered a key swing state, pundits and political powers-that-be are all keenly interested in how Virginia votes, believing that over the last decade the Commonwealth has best reflected the nation's changing demographics and overall political attitude, citing that the state's popular vote precisely matched the national popular vote numbers in the last two presidential elections. Another reason they're watching the Virginia results? Many analysts see the contest between Republican Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli and his opponent, Former Democratic Party Chairman Terry McAuliffe as critical toward gauging the 'values temperament' of the voting public. Cuccinelli hails from the conservative wing of his Party and has promoted being the first Attorney General to fight against the Affordable HealthCare Act. McAuliffe has run numerous campaign ads attacking Cuccinelli on his stands against abortion and legislation that he supported that many see as limiting women's rights. Political strategists believe that whoever takes the governor's mansion will be sending a message on what the American voter is really

"We need a good turnout. There's a lot at stake here, for us in Virginia, but I think as part of the whole country, too."

— Frank Bloodworth

interested in. Those already plotting the 2016 Presidential runs are particularly interested to see if swing-state Virginia ends up with a Democratic Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General to work alongside their two Democratic Senators, Mark Warner and Tim Kaine.

Inside the school, first time Chief Election Officer Thomas L. Cranmer, thought the numbers for Precinct 327 were looking a bit disappointing, but holding steady with 267 votes (out of about 3008 registered voters in the precinct) counted by 8:15 am. "All is going well," said Cranmer. "There haven't been any adjustments to the precinct boundaries this year, so that helps, and the Board of Elections does a great job sending out voter registration cards and information well before Election Day." Cranmer, who is an artist and a photographer and involved in the online Fairfax Free Citizen news, among other activities, joked that "even an artist can perform a public service," having graduated to the Chief Election Officer after several years as a poll volunteer.

Just a few miles away at Herndon Middle School, the same steady flow of voters was reported. Eduardo Nunez was proud to be voting in his second election, having become a US citizen just last year, "But in time to vote for the President," he said. "And now I am voting for our governor and for the others who will represent us." Nunez expressed his wish that those elected today "think of the people who voted for them. To shut down the government for any reason is wrong. I hope we don't have any more of that in Washington, and that our people here help keep us out of that kind of trouble," he added.

Neither polling venue reported any problems or mechanical glitches as of 9:00am, which was cause for plenty of sighs of relief. Several polls experienced technical malfunctions during the presidential election last year, like the voting machines in use at Fry-Pan Park, "So far, so good," was the common theme at the area polls. "Hope we can say that about all the officials we elect today and the government they give us," said Keith Manheim, overhearing the report from the precinct official after voting at Herndon Middle School.

VIEWPOINTS

Herndon Voters: Who Did You Vote for and Why?

— ANDREA WORKER

Frank Bloodworth walked to Herndon High School with his friend Eileen Virnston. "For me, my decision has a lot to do with women's rights," said Bloodworth. "It seems like they are trying to take more and more away. There's a loss of freedom, not the other way around. I can't say I am thrilled with McAuliffe, but I can't vote for Cuccinelli."



Eileen Virnston voted Democratic. "I think they side more with the poorer people and we need that," she said as she showed off her Democratic Sample Ballot.



"McAuliffe is like Obama, looking for a job for which he has no real experience," said **Ronald Mulvihill**, explaining why he voted for Ken Cuccinelli for governor. "And I have to say I didn't care for him (McAuliffe) at all. I am not sure that many people realize that he's not even from here. Supporting Obamacare is just too hard left and not good for Virginia or the country."



"I'm more of an independent," said **Sandy Morris**. "I voted for Democrat McAuliffe, but I also voted for Republican Tom Rust for Delegate. I think sometimes it's sadly more of a vote against one person than it is a vote for someone else. I feel like that was more how I voted for the governor."



"We're the different ones, no doubt. Our guy doesn't stand a chance, but we believe that things don't change unless you do something to make them change." That was how **Michael Cook** described the voting process for himself and wife **Janae**, who brought 18-month-old **Gioja May** along for the experience at Herndon Middle School. The Cooks voted for the Libertarian candidate, Robert Sarvis, for the governorship of Virginia. "We vote pretty much against all the party candidates. Every one of them says one thing during the campaign, but rarely follow up what they have promised or said they support. But we keep voting. Maybe one day we will see a strong third party."



THE COUNTY LINE



Alan Young of Burke, a member of FABB (Fairfax Advocates for Better Bicycling), talked with Jason Wu of Great Falls about the importance of bike and pedestrian-friendly transportation projects to ease congestion and make Fairfax County more “livable” at Hayfield High School Wednesday, Oct. 30.



Tom Biesiadny, director of Fairfax County's Department of Transportation, led the first of four “Countywide Dialogue on Transportation” meetings, held Oct. 30 at Hayfield High School in Alexandria.

PHOTOS BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Wants You

County launches “Transportation Dialogues” to get feedback on public’s priorities.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

Upcoming Meetings

- ❖ **Tuesday, Nov. 12 at 7 p.m.**
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Not since 1987 — when today’s 40-something motorists were newly-minted drivers — has Fairfax County seen any new revenue stream for its traffic-choked roadways or relief for the region’s chronic gridlock.

But on the last day of the Virginia General Assembly session last year, state lawmakers narrowly passed a landmark \$3.5 billion transportation bill.

Hailed as the most ambitious, sweeping transportation funding initiative in a generation, House Bill 2313 is projected to generate about \$880 million a year to reverse the decades-long erosion of road revenue.

And while Northern Virginia motorists will pay for much of it in the form of additional taxes, the area also stands to gain nearly \$2 billion in the next six years for transportation projects.

“At this time last year, we were in dire straits. We faced an epic transportation crisis,” said Fairfax County Supervisor Jeff McKay (D-Lee). “Because of the transportation bill, we’re at important point in our history, where we have money and we want the input of our citizens.”

McKay, who chairs the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, was speaking to a group of residents at Hayfield High School Wednesday night, Oct. 30. It was the first of four public forums — “Countywide Dialogue on Transportation Projects” — designed to educate and solicit input from residents on their priorities for county transportation projects.

TOM BIESIADNY, director of the county’s Department of Transportation (FCDOT), led the presentation: “We believe in the next six years there will be about \$1.2 billion for county transportation projects,” Biesiadny said. “We want to make use of those revenues, and ultimately make a recommendation back to the Board of Supervisors on Dec. 10 about your priorities for

the next six years.”

Biesiadny told residents the Board of Supervisors tasked his department with evaluating unfunded projects based on several criteria, including public input. Other criteria include congestion reduction, travel-time savings, school and park access and air quality.

Biesiadny said HB2313 provided new funding for both regional and local transportation projects, such as roadway, transit, bike and pedestrian projects. “These are ‘new capacity’ projects,” Biesiadny said, “You won’t see paving, fixing potholes or mowing the grass with this money.” He noted that money already committed to projects in the board’s four-year plans (FY 2013-FY2016) have been excluded from the discussion.

Biesiadny said FCDOT was starting its public outreach campaign this week, emphasizing that the public will have the opportunity to provide feedback in various ways — in person, online, via online chats, social voting or email through Nov. 18. All of the public meetings include an overview presentation, a question-and-answer session, educational materials and a series of coded maps to view the list of potential projects.

“Some of your ideas actually made it into the final General Assembly bill. The purpose of tonight is to look at the 214 unfunded projects, and get your input,” he said.

Supervisor Gerry Hyland (D-Mount. Vernon) joined McKay and Biesiadny at the meeting. “Mount Vernon’s priorities are, in this order, Route 1, Route 1 and Route 1,”

Hyland said, joking that the meeting was so important that he was missing Game Six of the World Series between his beloved Boston Red Sox and the St. Louis Cardinals. “This is my first time as a supervisor I’ve been able to come to a meeting and say ‘we can do something for you on transportation. Thanks General Assembly. And go Boston Red Sox!’”

Perhaps because of the Word Series, there were only about 20 residents at the meeting and six who gave brief comments, but they came from all parts of Fairfax County to talk transportation.

Jason Wu drove from his home in Great Falls to encourage the county to build a sidewalk on the one-mile section that leads into the town of Great Falls.

“I’m an ordinary citizen,” Wu said. “We have a petition with more than 100 signatures to get a sidewalk on that Westmoreland Street. It’s very dangerous to ride a bike there, and we have been spending a lot of time organizing to get this project on the list.”

Greg Budnick, a local engineer from Springfield, said he was there to caution supervisors “not to overreach financially” when evaluating projects. “Being a bicyclist, I can enjoy bike lanes and bike trails ... But I’m not sure anyone wants 10 feet of trees taken out of their development for more bike lanes.”

Jim Preston and David Mikkelson of Alexandria, who represented their HOA, said improvements along Richmond Highway, were critical to the easing congestion throughout the county.

Robert Michie, a representative of the Lee District Transit and Sidewalk Committee, lobbied for Project #182, which includes street pedestrian and bicycle access improvements along Van Dorn Street. The project, estimated at \$500,000 has been “on the books for years,” Michie said. “We’re pushing very strongly to get this particular one down because it provided metro access to Van Dorn Street. We consider Route 1 a lab. If we can fix Route 1, we can fix anything.”

EDITH KELLEHER OF VIENNA said she was there as the executive director of the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation. “We endorse Project #60,” Kelleher said. The project includes the widening Richmond Highway from four to six lanes from Mount Vernon Memorial Highway (Route 235) to Napper Road. The cost has yet to be determined.

Many of the unfunded projects on the county’s list were road widening projects that included pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Alan Young, a Burke resident and member of Fairfax Advocates for Better Biking (FABB), said the group was “furiously” reviewing the county’s bicycle master plan to see if there are components for bike and pedestrian access.

“It would be helpful when you look at projects to see that there are components for bike and pedestrian access,” he said. “One of our main goals is to make Tysons and other transit-oriented, mixed-use developments more bicycle-friendly.”

“We really appreciate Fairfax County for undertaking a major transformation of Tysons to create a livable, walkable community. Four new Silver Line Metro stations due to open in Tysons in 2014 are part of the foundation of that transformation. We want to see that throughout the county,” Young said after the meeting.

McKay said the supervisors were in the process of developing a master list of projects, and needed the public’s input.

“We want to be conscious of being fair throughout the county, because that’s the only way this thing will work. There are a lot of moving parts to this. So, your input is critical to this process.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the Countywide Dialogue on Transportation meetings, or to take the online survey, got to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fcdot/cdot/.

Residents can also visit the web site to sign up for email updates or find out if new meetings have been announced.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Touching Heart, a Herndon-based nonprofit, aims to give children the chance to give back, which includes running their own fundraisers.

Getting Children To Give Back

Touching Heart aims to train next generation of compassionate leaders.

BY ALEX MCVEIGH
THE CONNECTION

As her birthday approached several years ago, Taylor Yi of Herndon realized she wasn't that excited about another year of presents from her friends.

"She told me 'I have a lot of stuff, and I don't think I need anymore,' and decided that she would get her friends to make donations to those in need instead of giving her a present," said Helen Yi, Taylor's mother. "Everyone really got behind that idea, and it led to our Wishlist program."

That simple idea was the seed from which the nonprofit Touching Heart was born. Now Touching Heart helps connect local children with people in need.

"We got together a group of girls for a presentation and told them about the many ways they can make an impact, locally, across the country and around the world," Helen Yi said. "Once they started learning how blessed they were to have simple things like clean water, we started a real connection."

Soon Touching Heart launched their Kids On A Mission program, where they work with children and teach them how to organize, plan, market and execute their own fundraisers and other events.

CHILDREN ARE PAIRED with an adult mentor, but the responsibility for their event or cause is put squarely on their shoulders.

Kids On A Mission projects have

supported everything from helping Kenyan orphanage purchase water lemonade stand to funding a self-sufficient chicken farm in Mozambique.

"Of course, raising money is a big part of what we do, but deeper than that, we want the children to learn the joy of giving," Helen Yi said. "When they recognize the importance of charity at a young age, that's how you get a generation of compassionate leaders."

Older students, ages 12 to 13, are now hosting their own workshops for children ages 6 to 7.

"The older children get a chance to make an impact on the younger ones, many of whom see the older children as their role models," said Marina Amat, a board member. "The younger children can really get a sense of what they have and the need to help others from someone they look up to and admire."

One such workshop involved the older children discussing bullying with the younger children, teaching them how to recognize the warning signs, how to respond to a bully, and what to do if they see bullying.

"The older children used things like acting and role playing to show the younger kids the realities of bullying, and they really took to it," Amat said. "Seeing the children respond to the simulations, how they would stick up for someone they thought was being bullied and learned how to compassionately respond was very

SEE CHILDREN, PAGE 13

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WELLBEING

Running Marathon to Honor Brother

Oak Hill resident Ginny Atwood ran the Marine Corps Marathon to raise funds for the Chris Atwood Foundation.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

The road to recovery has its ups and downs, and it's not a sprint — it's a marathon. Those concepts are central to The Chris Atwood Foundation, an addiction stigma-killing outreach and support group formed earlier this year by Ginny Atwood and her parents Anne and Mark. They created the foundation shortly following the premature passing of brother and son Christopher from an accidental heroin overdose.

As a first major fundraiser, Ginny and three other members of "Team Chris" lived and breathed the foundation themes by training to run the 2013 Marine Corps Marathon and soliciting sponsorship donations. Ginny and the foundation plan to put the funds to work by transforming the way addiction treatment resources are disseminated in Fairfax County, reaching out to and supporting recovery groups, and ultimately breaking down the stigma associated with addicts in general.

They refer to their marching orders by the acronym F.R.E.A.K.S., which stands for Friends and Relatives Embracing Addiction and Kicking the Stigma. Appropriately, the concept came to Ginny spontaneously during a training run.

"I would not call myself a born runner by any means," said Ginny, an Oak Hill resident and graduate of South Lakes High School and George Mason University. But in the fall of 2012, she accepted a friend's challenge to complete a "couch-to-10k" running program



PHOTO COURTESY OF GINNY ATWOOD

Christopher Atwood is the inspiration for The Christopher Atwood Foundation, focused on heroin addiction outreach and support.

together. "I enjoyed pushing myself and realizing that I could slowly keep achieving increasing goals," she said.

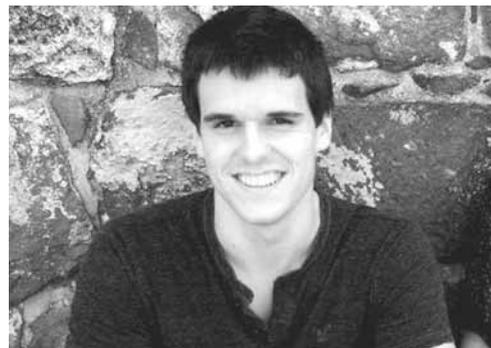
THE FORMER HIGH SCHOOL field hockey and lacrosse player had ended a period of relative inactivity by getting a YMCA membership together with her brother Christopher at the end of 2011. By that point, he had already been in and out of five different addiction rehab programs after coming clean to his family four years earlier. He was 15 when he began using the drug.

The physical activity agreed with him, and for Ginny it was a welcome opportunity for sibling bonding. "A lot of addicts find that working out is really good for recovery because it gives them that endorphin high that they're used to, but it's in a positive way," she said. "And of course it made him look better, and feel better in so

many ways."

Christopher's drug use started recreationally at the age of 13, Ginny believes, with marijuana and alcohol. But connections to older high school friends afforded him the opportunity to try heroin. When the Atwoods finally confronted Christopher about his increasingly thin frame and behavioral changes, he was up to a \$50 per day habit. His parents promptly enrolled the 16-year-old in the Caron Treatment Center for drug and alcohol addiction in Pennsylvania.

The cycle continued through numerous rehab centers, Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, and relapses. Christopher's final attempt at recovery was at the Sagebrush Treatment Center of Northern Virginia in January of 2013. Within a week of his release in February, he suffered an accidental heroin overdose.



"Team Chris" jogs through Georgetown, around mile five of the 2013 Marine Corps Marathon. From left: Amanda Thoburn, Katie Ernst, Allison Byers, Ginny Atwood.

"It's a really common story, unfortunately," said Ginny. "His tolerance was down. He didn't realize. There wasn't that much in his system — certainly not enough to be intentional."

WITHIN A FEW DAYS of Christopher's passing, the Atwood family and friends and supporters gathered at Ginny's house, attempting to find a foothold. "So what do we do now?" recalled Ginny. "Honestly it just immediately came to us and we all knew. My dad said, 'We have to do something. We're starting a foundation.'"

After that decisive move, their first thought was to simply fund scholarships for addiction treatment. But the group knew something else was necessary to appropriately honor Christopher.

"His spirit was so fun-loving," said Ginny. "He would always say there needs to be more fun in recovery. He wanted to make that something that was more enjoyable. NA and AA meetings are in-

helped so many of his friends that were struggling with addiction. He really did want to pull himself out of this and then turn around and help other people do the same thing."

Bringing down the negative stigma of heroin addicts — "skinny, emaciated junkies crouching by a dumpster somewhere in an inner city," said Ginny — is one of The Chris Atwood Foundation's primary objectives. "He was skinny when he first started using," she said. "But later you would look at him and you would never know. He was buff, he was extremely fit."

But because of stigma, "Christopher said he always felt like a freak, even though he was so not," Ginny said. "Like he was never going to be normal again."

That was the basis for the FREAKS program. "We want to reclaim that word for a good thing," Ginny said, and "reclaim recovery as a positive thing. Not as a shaming and stigmatizing

SEE RAISING, PAGE 7

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Raising Funds, Awareness to Help Drug Addicts

FROM PAGE 6

thing.”
A kickoff event is being planned for January that will feature a special guest speaker and a screening of the film “The Anonymous People.” And future goals include forming recovery communities on campuses in the vein of “Rams in Recovery” at VCU, and finding different ways to support families.

“My parents and I are not addicts,” said Ginny. “We don’t fully — we saw what it was like for Christopher, we’ve learned as much as we possibly can about it, but we’re not in that mindset. What we have lived through and what we do know so well is what it’s like to see a family member dying in front of you, and what do you do about it.”

TO SET OUT REACHING the foundation’s goals, they needed to establish a financial base. One thought to host a 5K charity run was quickly redirected by Ginny’s cousin, accomplished runner and blogger Dorothy Beal. She encouraged them to actually run a race themselves and acquire sponsorships. “What kind of race?” Ginny recalled them asking. “A marathon,” Beal had said.

Ginny decided to form a team with fellow South Lakes graduates Amanda Thoburn, Katie Ernst and Allison Byers. They initially set a fundraising goal of \$10,000, but Beal stepped in again with constructive feedback. “You really need to put your heart in it and pick a meaningful number,” Ginny recalled her saying. “So we then thought 21 because that’s the age he was when he died. We kind of braced ourselves for what we thought was going to be failure. \$21,000 — are you kidding me?”

They set out training and raising money through the website StayClassy, with inevitable speed bumps and obstacles in the way. Byers ran the same marathon in 2010, but had recently sustained a calf muscle strain. “If I wasn’t running for this, with them, I would’ve just said next year — I’ll defer it,” she said. “But it’s something that’s been completely inspiring. OK, I have a calf strain and this is setting me back, but there are always going to be obstacles. Chris has been helping us get through all the training. It’s been powerful, a bit of a roller coaster experience.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF GINNY ATWOOD

From left: Katie Ernst, Ginny Atwood, Amanda Thoburn, Allison Byers raced 26.2 miles and helped raise over \$27,000 for The Chris Atwood Foundation.

As of race day, Ginny and company had raised over \$27,000.

“Honestly we had no idea we were going to be this successful,” Ginny said. “It just goes to show, even though it’s such a hush-hush and taboo subject, how many people care so deeply about it and

are affected by it.”

To find out more about The Chris Atwood Foundation, visit www.chrisatwoodfoundation.org. For more information about UPC visit www.unifiedpreventioncoalition.org or www.facebook.com/unifiedpreventioncoalition.

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OPINION

Be Part of Children's Connection

Call for student artwork and writing; deadline Dec. 6.

During the last week of each year, The Connection devotes its entire issue to the creativity of local students and children. The results are always remarkable, and the editions have won many awards. It is a keepsake edition for many families, and an edition read and praised by readers with and without children.

The annual Children's Connection is a tradition of well over a decade, and we begin getting inquiries from teachers and parents about submitting artwork and writing almost as soon as each school year begins.

We publish artwork, poetry, essays, creative writing, opinion pieces, short stories, photography, photos of sculpture or gardens or other creative efforts.

We ask that all submissions be digital so they can be sent through email or delivered on CD or flash drive. Writing should be submitted in rich text format (.rtf). Artwork should be photographed or scanned and provided in jpeg format.

Identify each piece of writing or art, including the student's full name, age, grade and town of residence, plus the name of the school, name

of teacher and town of school location. Please provide the submissions by Friday, Dec. 6.

Some suggestions:

❖ Drawings or paintings or photographs of family, friends, pets or some favorite activity. These should be photographed or scanned and submitted in jpeg format.

❖ Short answers (50 to 100 words) to some of the following questions: If you could give your parents any gift that didn't cost money what would that gift be? What are you most looking forward to in the upcoming year? What is one thing that you would change about school? What do you want to be when you grow up? What is your favorite animal? What is your favorite toy? What makes a good parent? What makes a good friend? What is one of the best or worst things that ever happened to you? What is the best gift you've ever given? Ever received?

❖ Opinion (50 to 100 words) about traffic, sports, restaurants, video games, toys, trends, etc.

❖ Poetry or other creative writing.

❖ Opinion pieces about family, friends, movies, traffic, sports, food, video games, toys, trends, etc.

❖ News stories from school newspapers.

We welcome contributions from families, public and private schools, individuals and homeschoolers.

Email submissions for the Vienna/Oakton, McLean, Great Falls, Reston and Oak Hill/

Herndon Children's Connections to ChildrensNorth@connectionnewspapers.com.

Email submissions for Springfield, Burke, Fairfax, Fairfax Station/Clifton/Lorton Connections to ChildrensSouth@Connectionnewspapers.com.

Email submissions for the Potomac Almanac to editor Steven Mauren at smauren@connectionnewspapers.com.

Email submissions for the Arlington Children's Connection to editor Steven Mauren at smauren@connectionnewspapers.com.

Email submissions for the Children's Centre View to editor Steven Mauren at smauren@connectionnewspapers.com.

Email submissions for the Children's Gazette in the Alexandria Gazette Packet or Mount Vernon Gazette to editor Steven Mauren at smauren@connectionnewspapers.com.

To send CDs or flash drives containing artwork and typed, electronic submissions, mark them clearly by school and hometown and mail the CD to Children's Connection, 1606 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Please send all submissions by Dec. 6. The Children's Connection will publish the week of Dec. 26, 2013.

EDITORIAL

Helping Most Vulnerable Neighbors

Individuals with mental illness represent a disproportionately high percentage of the homeless population.

BY RUSSELL SNYDER

Once in a while you read or hear about mental health illness, probably in this very paper. However, more often than not, mental illness is discussed only when a tragedy occurs that brings it to the forefront of the national dialogue. We should strive, as a community, to change that.

More than 260,000 adults in Virginia live with serious mental illness. In the Fairfax-Falls Church community approximately 1,350 people are homeless; more than half of those individuals suffer from serious mental illness.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Individuals with mental illness represent a disproportionately high percentage of the homeless population. With statistics like those above, this is an issue that needs our attention all year round.

For readers that do not know, Volunteers of America operates Bailey's Crossroads Community Shelter, a 50-bed emergency homeless shelter in Fairfax County for men and women. In our shelter, clients receive case management based on individualized service plans. They attend various life skills groups to empower them to make positive changes. Bailey's also has an outreach partnership

with the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board. A Community Case Manager works directly with our clients who have been identified by staff as having a mental health diagnosis. These individuals receive services and support to build their self-sufficiency, the end goal for all of our clients in every single program we run.

It takes many resources to help homeless individuals with a mental health diagnosis find their way to recovery, but it is possible to accomplish this goal with programs like Bailey's and collaborations among community partners.

If you would like a behind-the-scenes look at the work Volunteers

of America Chesapeake is doing to assist those that are homeless and challenged with mental illness, call Tonya Fulwood, Vice President of Homeless Services, at 240-764-2661. Be an advocate and help us create awareness so we can continue to help our neighbors travel the road to self-sufficiency.

Thank you to the Fairfax community and our partners throughout Northern Virginia for your support as we continue to serve our most vulnerable neighbors in the fight to prevent and end homelessness in our communities.

The writer is President/CEO of Volunteers of America Chesapeake, a faith-based health and human services nonprofit assisting more than 8,000 people each year at 31 programs, many serving the homeless and mentally ill. Bailey's Crossroads Community Shelter has been the community's primary emergency homeless shelter since 1994.

To have community events listed in the Connection, send to herndon@connectionnewspapers.com by the Friday prior to the following week's paper.

the lobby. All toys will be distributed to needy children within Loudoun County and to Herndon & Reston children via the non-profit Herndon-Reston FISH, Inc. "Newborn to 1-Year Old" and the "Teens" age groups are particularly needed. 703-860-4600.

MONDAY-TUESDAY/NOV. 11-12

Shapes for Children. 10-11 a.m. at the Walker Nature Center, 11450 Glade Drive, Reston. Children ages 18 months to 35 months can find the shapes in nature, such as the leaves

fallen off the trees to make a shape necklace on the hike through the woods. Reservations by Nov. 7. \$5/child for Reston Association members; \$8/child non-members. naturecenter@reston.org, or 703-476-9689 and press 5.

Oak Hill & Herndon CONNECTION

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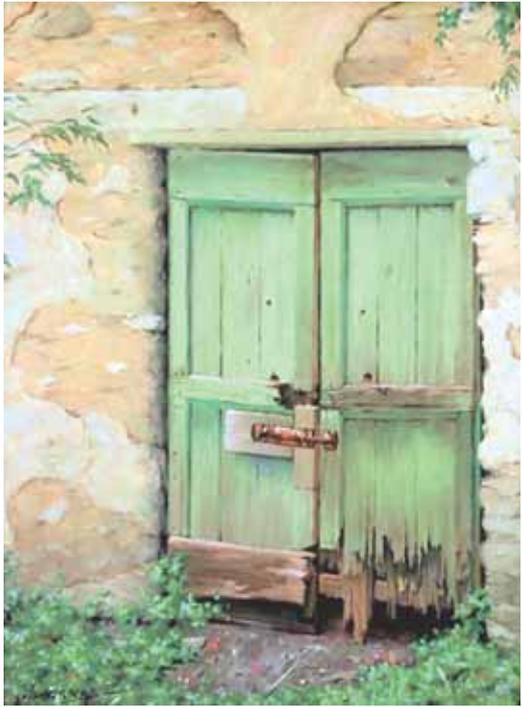
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Artists of Montorno Opens at ArtSpace Herndon

ArtSpace Herndon will be opening a brand new exhibit this week titled "Artists of Montorno." Beginning Tuesday, Nov. 5 the exhibit will provide a glimpse into the Montorno Studio in Seravezza, Italy. "It is a wonderful view of Italy and there is a good amount of diversity amongst the artists and their work," Public Relations Manager Brenda Page said.

The exhibit features work by Montorno Workshops instructors Trisha Adams, Danni Dawson, Mary Del Popolo, Peggy Feerick, Mike Francis, Gavin Glakas, and Kurt Schwartz, who are all locally and internationally known artists. Portraits, landscapes, still-life paintings, sculptures, drawings, pastels, printmaking, and photography are featured in the beautifully rich exhibit. Since the studio is a consummate learning experience, the work of students will be highlighted in the exhibit.



"The Best Door In Tuscany" by Gavin Glakas.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTSPACE HERNDON

ern Tuscany, only a few miles from the Mediterranean Sea. Montorno is surrounded by spectacular views of marble quarries, chestnut forests, and lush valleys, leading to the Mediterranean Sea. There are approximately 60 pieces of artwork that will be on display at the exhibit, many of them available for purchase.

There will be an artists' reception on Saturday, Nov. 9, from 7 to 9 p.m. Musicians Mike and Dave Gassmann of the Gassmann Jazz Duo will be performing, and there will be light refreshments during the reception. Artists Judy Morse, Mike Francis, Kurt Schwarz and Mary Del Popolo are expected to attend.

ArtSpace Herndon is a community art gallery located at 750 Center Street, Herndon, Virginia. To learn more about the ArtSpace Herndon, visit the webpage at <http://www.artspaceherndon.com>.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Send announcements to reston@connectionnewspapers.com. The deadline is the Friday prior to the following week's paper. Photos/artwork encouraged. For additional listings, visit <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2013/sep/26/fairfax-county-calendar/>.

WEDNESDAY-SATURDAY/NOV. 6-30

Ventures and Puzzles. 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Sunday, at Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Abstract oil paintings by Frank Eifert, in an exhibit in which "Half-Reflections" accompany each picture to metaphorically suggest some of the intentions, surprises and significances encountered in the creation of the picture. In this series of paintings, Frank developed a "multi-directional" style, painting from all four sides and four corners (for square pictures), essentially providing up to eight distinct pictures, the multiple options of viewing reflecting the ambivalence and ambiguity of our time. 703-467-4500 or www.restoncommunitycenter.com.



"The Rest Area," by Jungmin Park, 2007. Park will exhibit his mixed media work alongside Ajay Leister's installations Nov. 18 through the New Year at Greater Reston Arts Center, 12001 Market St., Suite 103, Reston.

Glakas and Kurt Schwarz—locally and internationally known artists. Portraits, landscapes, still life paintings, drawings, pastels, printmaking and photography are featured. 703-956-6590 or www.artspaceherndon.org.

WEDNESDAY-SUNDAY/NOV. 6-DEC. 9

The Artists of Montorno. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday-Saturday; and 1-5 p.m. Sunday, at ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center St., Herndon. Montorno painting workshops in Seravezza, Italy, have been a refuge for artists to study with famous painters and sculptors for almost two decades. The exhibit features the work of Montorno instructors Danni Dawson, Mike Francis, Trisha Adams, Mary Del Popolo, Peggy Feerick, Gavin



"Sentinel and Sprout," Ajay Leister, 2010. Leister's installation work is up along with Jungmin Park's mixed media paintings Nov. 18 through the New Year at Greater Reston Arts Center, 12001 Market St., Suite 103, Reston.

16th annual Monte Carlo Night. 6:30-11 p.m., in the ballroom at the Fairview Park Marriott, 3111 Fairview Park Drive, Falls Church. The Fairfax Rotary Club hosts the black tie optional gala with dancing from The Loudoun Jazz Ensemble, a dinner buffet, silent and live auctions, a free drink and free parking. \$75. www.dunnloring-merrifieldrotary.org.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/NOV. 8-10

2013 Nature Visions Conference. 9:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m., at Hylton Center, George Mason University, 10960 George Mason Circle, Manassas. The exhibition put on by the League of Reston Artists is full of juried, nature-themed photos selected from seven mid-Atlantic photography clubs. www.leagueofrestonartists.org.

SATURDAY/NOV. 9

Opening Reception. 7-9 p.m., at 750 Center St., Herndon. Meet locally and internationally known artists who teach at the artists' retreat in Seravezza, Italy. 703-956-6590 or www.artspaceherndon.org.
Fall-Winter Contra Dances. 7:15-8 p.m. lesson, 8-10:45 p.m. dance, at RCC Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Michael Barraclough calls the first of four fall-winter contra dances to the music of the June Apple Band; no partner necessary. \$9 (lesson is free). anote20@gmail.com.

SATURDAY/NOV. 10

Ancient Chinese Artistry Brushpainting Reception. 2-4 p.m., at 1609 Washington Plaza N., SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 11

THURSDAY/NOV. 7

Mosby's Raids. 7 p.m., at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Award-winning author William Connery will speak on his new book, "Mosby's Raids in Civil War Northern Virginia," and the

life of Virginia's "Gray Ghost" Colonel John Singleton Mosby, who led an elite band of raiders that was one of the most feared units fighting during the Civil War. 703-689-2700.

FRIDAY/NOV. 8

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 10

Reston. Tracie Griffith Tso, a Chinese brushpainter, extends beyond basic tradition in her work by mixing traditional bamboo images with selections of flora and fauna; a collection of her RCC students' works will also be displayed. 703-476-4500, www.inksart.com or <http://www.pinterest.com/griffithtso/boards/>.

David Henry Hwang's "Lost and Found in Translation." 3 p.m. Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. The Tony Award-winning playwright of "M. Butterfly" discusses his works, writing process, and artistic philosophy. \$15 Reston, \$30 Non-Reston. www.restoncommunitycenter.com.

SATURDAY/NOV. 16

The Rite of Spring Double Feature. 8 p.m. Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. The CenterStage celebrates the 100th anniversary of Stravinsky's ballet and orchestral concert piece with performances by the Bowen McCauley Dance Ensemble and Darryl Brenzel and the Bohemian Taverns Jazz Orchestra. \$25 Reston, \$50 Non-Reston. www.restoncommunitycenter.com.

SUNDAY/NOV. 17

Dabbling in Magic. 4 p.m., at Hunters Woods, Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. The first concert of the 26th season of the Reston Community Orchestra directed by Dingwall Fleary, featuring guest Cheryl Roeske on the harp. Admission is anon-perishable good to support Reston's annual

Thanksgiving food drive. www.restoncommunityorchestra.org.

TUESDAY/NOV. 19

Design and Wine. 7-9 p.m., at ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center Street, Herndon. Join for "Design and Wine: Zinfandel and Zentangles," with guest artist Keith Naquin. Zentangles is a purposeful doodling art form that's a cross between meditation and graphic design. \$30. 703-956-6590 or artspaceherndon.org.

THURSDAY/NOV. 21

Politicians and the Press. 8 p.m., at Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation, 1441 Wiehle Ave., Reston. Washington correspondent for The New York Times Sheryl Gay Stolberg shares insight on the interplay between politicians and the press, sharing examples from reporting during the George W. Bush and Obama administrations.

FRIDAY/NOV. 22

"Black 'n Blue Boys" by Dael Orlandersmith. 8 p.m. Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Orlandersmith performs her original piece about seven male victims of abuse. Adults only. \$20 Reston, \$40 Non-Reston. www.restoncommunitycenter.com.

MONDAY/NOV. 18

Park and Leister Exhibit. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, at GRACE, 12001 Market St., Suite 103, Reston. Leister's sculptural installations and Park's mixed media works are on exhibit. 703-471-9242 or www.restonarts.org.

FAITH NOTES

Faith Notes are for announcements and events in the faith community, including special holiday services. Send to reston@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Thursday.

Stacy Beyer, one of Time Magazine's pick for Top 10 Stars of New Jewish Music in 2013, will be performing at Congregation Beth Emeth on Saturday, Nov. 16 as part of a weekend-long celebration in honor of the installation of Rabbi Michelle Goldsmith. Originally from New York, Beyer moved to Nashville, Tenn. at the encouragement of country music legends Merle Haggard and Roy Acuff to pursue country music songwriting. After initial success with EMI Music Publishing, a unique opportunity arose to write songs for a Warner Brothers' recording—A Children's Chanukah. This experience led to other invitations to create music with Jewish content for various programs in Nashville. Eventually, this new musical direction brought about the production of Beyer's first Jewish CD, Find Your Voice.

Beyer's music is used throughout the country in congregations, camps, and Jewish events. For ticket information, please visit <http://www.bethemeth.org/celebrate/index.htm>

Trinity Presbyterian Church, 651 Dranesville Road, Herndon, has Sunday worship services at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Nursery and childcare are provided and youth and adult Sunday school classes are held prior, from 9:40-10:45 a.m. 703-437-5500 or www.trinityherndon.org.

Vajrayogini Buddhist Center, Unitarian Universalist Church, 1625 Wiehle Ave., Reston, holds weekly classes starting Sept. 12, Thursdays 7-8:30 p.m., for the general public which use Buddhist teachings to practice meditation. \$12. 202-986-2257 or www.meditation-dc.org.

St. Anne's Episcopal Church, 1700 Wainwright Drive in Reston, holds Sunday services at 7:45 a.m., 9 a.m., 11:15 a.m. and contemporary service at 5 p.m. Nursery, Sunday school and adult education available. Morning prayer on Monday at 9:30, Holy Eucharist Wednesday at 8:15 a.m. 703-437-6530 or www.stannes-reston.org.

Adult Sunday school will be held 9:30 a.m. Sundays at the Washington Plaza Baptist Church at Lake Anne Village Center. The group is studying the Gospel of Mark. Services follow at 11 a.m.

HAVEN of Northern Virginia offers a variety of free bereavement support groups, meeting on a weekly basis. Contact 703-941-7000 or www.havenofnova.org for schedules and registration information.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and the Jewish Outreach Institute offer the Mothers/Parents Circle, an umbrella of free educational events and resources. Jewish rituals, ethics and the creation of a Jewish home, regular meetings and group Shabbats and holidays.

Participants include Sha'are Shalom, Congregation Beth Emeth, Temple Rodef Shalom and the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia. ShalomDC.org.

The Baha'i community of

McLean holds a weekly fireside, a meeting of discussion, devotion and fellowship, at 7500 Box Elder Court in McLean, at 8 p.m. every Friday. An opportunity to learn about the Baha'i faith. 703-556-3400.

Epiphany United Methodist Preschool, 1014 Country Club Drive, N.E. in Vienna, is now enrolling 3- to 4-year-old students for the 2010/2011 school year. 703-938-2391 or www.epiphanypreschool.com.

Hope Fellowship Church will temporarily be meeting at Woody's Golf Range, 11801 Leesburg Pike, Herndon. Sunday worship services for the Southern Baptist church are at 10:45 a.m. The public is invited to join a Bible believing, multi-ethnic/multi-cultural congregation, with Bible-based sermons and uplifting music. 703-599-3527 or www.hopefellowshipchurchloudoun.org.

Knitters needed the first and third Wednesdays of the month, at 7 p.m., at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, 432 Van Buren St., Herndon. The church's Shawl Ministry is offering free knitting instruction while providing shawls, blankets and other knitted items for people in need. No cost and yarn can be provided. E-mail shawl@saint-timothys.org or visit the Pastoral Care page at www.saint-timothys.org.

Nondenominational Christian businessmen meet for prayer, Biblical discussion and fellowship 7 p.m. Fridays at Anita's, 1051 Elden St., Herndon and 12 p.m. Thursdays at 555 Grove St., Suite 200, Herndon. Call 703-795-1257.

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Paying Attention to the Pros

High School coaches, players share opinions on Redskins' Meriweather.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

During his seven-year NFL career, Washington Redskins safety Brandon Meriweather's aggressive style of play has led to penalties, fines and a recent suspension for repeated helmet-to-helmet hits.

In a time of heightened awareness regarding head injuries in football, Meriweather's tackling techniques, which include launching himself head-first at opposing receivers, have earned the 29-year-old former first-round draft choice from

the University of Miami a reputation as a dangerous defender. Meriweather was flagged for two illegal hits against the Chicago Bears and subsequently suspended by the NFL for two games. The ban was later reduced to a single contest, costing Meriweather a game check worth more than \$70,000. Meriweather sat out of Washington's Oct. 27 game against Denver and returned for its Nov. 3 contest against San Diego.

NFL players aren't the only ones taking notice of the Redskins safety's approach to defense.

Just ask Philip Tyler, a senior defensive back at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, if he's familiar with Meriweather.

"The hunter?" he asks.

Tyler, a Philadelphia Eagles fan, is familiar with Washington's hard-hitting safety.

"He won't be hunted. He's the hunter," Tyler said. "You watch out for him. You've got to watch out for him. If there's anybody on the field you watch out for, you watch out for him. That's a career-ending dude right there." Tyler said he and other high school athletes like to mimic their favorite NFL players, but when it comes to high-light-tape hits, Tyler said T.C. Williams coaches punish players with extra conditioning for leading with their helmets while hitting in practice. Tyler said his tackling technique has evolved since his youth football days, but injuries from years of tackling with his head have taken a toll.

"A lot of stuff has changed," he said. "Back in rec league and Pop Warner, I was reckless. It didn't matter. ... I've got to wear [a neck protector] because of that. I used to hit with my head and I've got neck injuries. I've got a weak neck now."

PRIOR TO THE 2013 SEASON, a collision in practice led to Tyler having difficulty moving one of his arms for an entire month, he said.

"We were doing a screen drill and ... I had read it real good and I was like, 'I've got to hit [the receiver]," Tyler said. "At this time, we were still competing for spots. I was like, 'I've got to be the hammer, not the nail,' and I hit him. Next thing I know ... my whole arm, it was done. It felt like it wasn't even there."

Langley High School senior Garrett



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUZEL/THE CONNECTION

T.C. Williams' Philip Tyler (21) defends against Lake Braddock's AJ Alexander.

Collier is a two-way starter for the school's football team, playing receiver on offense and safety and outside linebacker on defense. A Redskins fan, Collier said he has no issue with how Meriweather plays the game. "Most people in the NFL are trying to hit people as hard as they can," Collier said. "I don't think anyone purposely tries to hit someone in the head, but some people have more of a tendency to hit up high. ... I kind of get frustrated when the refs are quick to call a penalty for hitting high or targeting. ... I'm on the players' side."

While Collier follows the NFL, he said he doesn't try to emulate the pros when he's on the field.

"If a receiver is open," he said, "I'm not trying to take his [head off]. I'm trying to make the smart [play]."

On offense, Collier said he tries to protect himself from big hits, but he hasn't always been able to do so. Collier suffered a concussion during an eighth-grade football game that caused him to black out and vomit.

"I got hit by some kid," he said. "I completely blacked out. I woke up in the ambulance and I was throwing up. ... I literally have no recollection of the hit or what was leading up [to it]."

DeMornay Pierson-El, a senior quarterback and defensive back for the West Potomac High School football team, is committed to play at the University of Nebraska as a slot receiver and kick returner. Pierson-El, a Baltimore Ravens fan, said he likes Meriweather's aggressive style of play, but not the kind of hits he delivers.

"He doesn't have to hit so high," Pierson-El said. "He can hit a little bit lower, I feel, like from the shoulders down is fine."

Pierson-El said going for a highlight-reel hit is risky.

"The big hit is not always the best play," he said. "Going for a big hit up top and the dude bounces off and still gains yards [is] not a good look."

Lake Braddock junior AJ Alexander, a receiver and defensive back for the undefeated Bruins, said injuries are part of the game, but using proper tackling technique can help make the game safer.

"I realize how dangerous [helmet-to-helmet hits are]," Alexander said. "I've seen a lot of things on the news about how dangerous it is. That's why we've [been doing] the whole Heads Up Tackling thing (through USA Football) that's being implemented and we're making sure that we're being fundamentally sound. Plus, if you hit people [around the head], you might not even make the tackle. There are a lot of things to think about, but being fundamentally sound is what it all comes down to."

Alexander is a New York Giants fan.

"[Helmet-to-helmet hits are] part of the game because it's a physical sport," he said. "You've got helmets on, shoulder pads, you've just got to be physical. You've got to do what you've got to do."

Heads Up Tackling, which Alexander referred to, is part of the Heads Up Football program, which is offered through USA Football, the governing body for American football at the youth and amateur levels, and supported by the NFL. Heads Up Tackling focuses on teaching proper tackling technique at the youth and high school levels using five fundamentals: the breakdown position; buzzing your feet; the hit position; shooting the hips; ripping the arms.

HEADS UP TACKLING is one of five elements of Heads Up Football. The other four are: having coaches complete a certification course; teaching coaches concussion recognition and response protocols; appointing a trained safety coach to a participating high school team or youth league; and teaching coaches and parents about proper equipment fitting.

The program is backed by the Northern Virginia Football Coaches Association and used by high school teams around the re-

gion.

Centreville High School head coach Chris Haddock flew to Indianapolis during the winter and became a master trainer of tackling techniques. He said the goal of establishing common language and common technique when teaching tackling to youth football players is to have a "trickle up" effect, leading to safer tackling at the college and pro levels.

When it comes to the NFL, Haddock, a Pittsburgh Steelers fan, said he doesn't see any of his Centreville players trying to emulate what they see on TV. He also said the Steelers have been penalized at times for hits that are simply part of the game.

"Some of them I agree with, some of them I don't," he said. "Having played, sometimes you're flying through the air and someone else is flying through the air and your heads hit. It's not something people plan on doing." The Oakton High School football team has a subscription to NFL Rewind, which allows subscribers to watch replays of each NFL game from different angles in the way a coach would analyze film. Head coach Jason Rowley said he wants his players to emulate the aggressive nature of pro and college athletes, but wants the Cougars to stay away from dirty plays and showboating.

When it comes to Meriweather, Rowley complimented the defensive back's effort.

"I think he's a guy who plays hard," Rowley said. "I think it's certainly not my place to judge whether he's within the rules or he should be fined. I love the passion he plays with and I'd like my players to play with that passion."

Whitman High School head coach Jim Kuhn said most of the athletes in his Bethesda, Md., program aren't the type to initiate helmet-to-helmet hits. He said families in the area have a heightened awareness of concussion risks and players don't want to risk major injury playing a sport that will have no impact on their future.

"The opportunities for them to play on Sunday are pretty limited and they have a life to live beyond football," Kuhn said. "... It's definitely not a means to an end [for most Whitman athletes]. ... Most are headed to college ... [for] other careers and future endeavors. ... [Football is] not a way out for them."

After returning from his suspension for repeated helmet-to-helmet hits, Meriweather said he would start going low to make tackles.

Whatever Meriweather does, high school players and coaches will likely take notice.

"That's just his style. He's always been aggressive. Even in college, he was known as a big hitter," said South Lakes head coach Marvin Wooten, a Dallas Cowboys fan. "... In this sport, I don't think there's any individual out there trying to end careers or cause any kind of permanent damage on a player. ... I think that's just the way he's played the game."

Children Learn to 'Touch Heart,' Help Those in Need

FROM PAGE 5
moving to watch."

That attitude of positivity is what brought Touching Hearts their new program director.

"I heard about them when I moved to the area, and at a time when the news is filled with bullying and violence, Touching Hearts is making a concerted effort to show children the benefits

of compassion and love," said Cacky Dias, who became their program director at the end of the summer. "We've got schools that work hard on molding children's minds, but Touching Hearts works on their heart."

TOUCHING HEARTS has several annual events, including a summer carnival party for local

foster children, a holiday outreach program to homeless shelters and an annual golf tournament that serves as their primary fundraiser.

Going forward, Amat says the challenge facing Touching Heart is continuing to reinforce the principles that the students learn from the organization.

"The first step is to help children find their voice and grow as lead-

ers, so as they get older they can take on major leadership roles," she said. "The challenge is going to be keeping them inspired through the years as more things, like studies, sports and other activities, begin to compete for their time, but hopefully we've laid a foundation that will get them to always make the time."

Helen Yi said Touching Heart is

currently working with the Fairfax County School Board to develop a service-based curriculum that could be used in county schools, either as a classroom initiative or an after-school activity.

The next fundraising golf tournament for Touching Heart will be Thursday, May 8 at Lansdowne Resort. More information is available at www.touchingheart.org.

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By KENNETH B. LOURIE

There's more talk now than ever before, about the possibility of the Washington, D.C. professional football team changing its name. The current name, which resonates to those of us who care about such things, has been front and center and generally accepted for over 80 years, since 1932 in fact. After so many years in the League and five NFL Championships to their credit, to say the current ownership and its rabid and loyal fan base are attached to the team's name is hardly newsworthy. However, cultural changes in our country and politically correct sensitivities have merged of late and the name we've mostly grown to respect and admire has come under some scrutiny and as a result, certain Indian Nations, most recently The Oneida Nation, have expressed their dismay at what they perceive to be the continuing use of a racial slur by this franchise; in effect, a name that demeans and is totally inappropriate and no longer tolerable in 21st century America.

I am certainly not one to pass judgment on such characterizations and hot-button issues of the day, so I won't (I'm mostly cancer-centric these days). But I would like propose a name-compromise of sorts. Why not change the name to The Washington Redskin Potatoes? This name would blend together the good (the familiar), minimize the bad (the insensitive) and enable the team, its ownership and fan base to sort of have its name and not suffer any separation anxiety because of it. Even better, "Let's Go Skins" still works, too. It would henceforth refer to a potato, however, rather than a People. Hopefully, there are no potato interests in Maine or Idaho that would object to introducing its starchiness into the National Football League.

Let's face it; who doesn't like potatoes at the ballpark? Or anywhere for that matter; even me, and I'm the fussiest eater this side of Mikey, the kid from the old Life Cereal commercials who was famously stubborn about his breakfast-food choices. I'm not exactly sure what the mascot would look like; probably not a Mr. Potato Head-type look-alike, but neither do I envision seeing an Indian headdress on a potato either. Of course, I doubt I'll be entrusted to lead up the marketing campaign for such an important and historic transformation. After all, I'm only a writer attempting to sow some seeds of humor – and perhaps a little discontent, while trying to find a middle ground that potentially keeps the home fires burning (or is that home fries cooking?) without offending a proud people fighting for their ancestral respect – both in the past and in the present/future.

Momentum to keep the name does not seem to be building. Nevertheless, the status quo may yet win the day. Still, The National Football League, despite its reach from coast to coast and possibly even from continent to continent (as there's continuing talk about franchises in London and Japan; note the in-season contests scheduled presently for this year and next) is still just a game, a game with a 12 billion dollar revenue stream, but a game nonetheless. The Oneida Nation is a people. People matter more than games. And feelings matter most of all, and failings, too. To not consider their feelings would be a failure. And failure is definitely not a trait any of us want to associate with the new Washington Redskin Potatoes.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

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Reston Hospital Receives Awards for Patient Care

Reston Hospital Center has announced the recognition of several departmental awards for their patient care. Over the past several months, Reston Hospital Center has received five awards celebrating these significant achievements. The list of awards include "Top Performer on Key Quality Measures" from the Joint Commission, an "A" rating from the Hospital Safety Score™ Initiative, and two three-year accreditations from the National Accreditation Program for Breast Cancer (NAPBC) and the American College of Radiology (ACR). Reston Hospital Center has also been awarded the designation of a Center of Excellence in Minimally Invasive Gynecology. Each recognition requires detailed evaluation and inquiry of the departmental endeavors. The "Top Performer on Key Quality Measures" by the Joint Commission distinguishes healthcare organizations that have exemplary performance in using evidence-based clinical process, that are shown to improve care for certain conditions. This year, Reston Hospital Center has been recognized for its achievements in heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia, and surgical care. Hospital Safety Score™ awarded an "A" rating to the hospital, citing an improved grade from the "B" in the previous year. The Blue Ribbon Expert Panel comprising experts in quality care from Harvard, Johns Hopkins, and Stanford University, use 28 measures of publicly available hospital safety data to produce a single "A", "B", "C", "D", or "F" score representing a hospital's overall capacity to keep patients safe from preventable harm. Distributed by the Leapfrog Group (Leapfrog), it is the only peer-reviewed hospital grading system in the United States. Reston Hospital Center has received two three-year accreditations with the National Accreditation Program for Breast Cancer (NAPBC) and the American College of Radiology (ACR). A program under the American College of Surgeons, NAPBC awards accreditations to healthcare facilities that are voluntarily committed to providing the highest level of quality breast care. Reston Hospital Center continues to demonstrate a commitment to offer its patients every significant advantage in their battle against breast disease. The American College of Radiology presented the hospital with an assessment score of 100 percent. The score was based on a peer-review evaluation by board-certified radiation oncologists and medial physicians. After exhibiting competency in numerous fields, and completing an evaluation, The Surgical Review Corporation awarded Reston Hospital Center the Center of Excellence in Minimally Invasive Gynecology (COEMIG) designation. Out of the 5,185 registered hospitals nationwide, the hospital now joins the small group of nearly 60 healthcare facilities that hold this award. The Surgical Review Corporation only considers health facilities and their associated surgeons who demonstrate high-quality preoperative patient care and have completed the designating process.

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